

of the coalfields 1912 saw the biggest national strike till then experienced in Great Britain its purpose being to force the coal-owners to meet the gravest cases of hardship and injustice, those experienced by men working in "abnormal places." Its result was the 1912 Act, laying down, not a national minimum, as the miners had hoped, but district minima, adjusted by Joint Boards in the various areas. About the time of the outbreak of war, the miners had entered into an association with the Railwaymen and the Transport Workers—later generally known as the Triple Alliance,—with a view to making a new effort to break down the blank refusal of the fifteen hundred separate colliery owners and companies to consider any kind of national basis for the settlement of wage rates etc.

During the War, the miners thought of nothing but their country's need. Every kind of sectional claim was dropped, they flocked to the colours with such zeal that they had, later, to be forbidden to leave the mines, and were sent back, in large numbers, from the front. The War bonus granted in 1917 and 1918 by no means met the rise that had taken place in the cost of living, yet, until the war ended, the miners kept silence, out of sheer patriotism. Only then did the Federation, after going through all the elaborate provisions as to ballots, giving of notice etc., laid down in the Agreements, in February 1919, demand a 30 per cent rise in wages, a nominal six-hours day, and the Nationalisa-

tion of the mines, which were, like the railways,
still under
Government control

Its position was strong It had able leadership,
with Frank
Hodges, then the rising star of the Trade
Union world, as
full-time Secretary and Robert Smilhe as full-
time President
It had its superb war service record behind it,
and, on
elementary grievances, a powerful human case
Since the
nation's stocks of coal were very low—London,
for example,
having no more than two days' supply—the
strike threat